Wendy
With love from
Mrs Page
An unbirthday present
Feb 26 19

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"—— AND SUCH SMALL DEER"

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

"THE MORE I SEE OF MEN . . ."
OUT OF A CLEAR SKY
IF DOGS COULD WRITE

HEADS OF ANGELS

(NEW STYLE)

Adapted by Persis Kirmse from Sir Joshua's National Gallery picture

"—— AND SUCH SMALL DEER"

by

E. V. LUCAS

"—— mice and rats and such small deer."
EDGAR in *King Lear*.

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Frontispiece by Persis Kirmse

"—— AND SUCH SMALL DEER"

"EAST, WEST, HOME'S BEST"

ONCE upon a time there was a little girl who was taken to the Zoo by her father. Her father's tastes where wholly scientific : he paid several guineas a year for the privilege of forgetting to give away Sunday tickets ; he could add F.Z.S. to his name if he liked ; and when he went in, he asked for a pen and wrote his name instead of putting down a coin like inferior folk. But while with eager eyes the father scrutinized this odd creature and that, the little girl was curiously unmoved by the world's strange fauna, whether elephants or water beetles, mandrils or giraffes, and the result was that she followed him listlessly and fatigued throughout the expedition.

The little girl, I say, was listless and fatigued—except for two wonderful minutes. For it chanced that as they walked in solemn procession through the house of the ostriches and the emus and various cassowaries named after their discoverers, they came to the Patagonian Cavy, and the little girl, loitering at his bars, uttered a gasp of delight, for there, all unconcerned and greedy, was also a tiny English mouse, eating grain.

The mouse looked at her with its brilliant eyes, and nibbled as though there were only two minutes of all time left for refreshment; and, secure in the knowledge of the dividing bars, it refused even to blink when she flicked her hand at it. She never bothered about the Patagonian Cavy at all.

"What is it? What is it?" her father impatiently inquired.

"Hush!" she said. "Do come back and look at this darling little mouse."

"Pooh—a mouse!" said her father, and strode on, eager to reach the elusive apteryx.

"Well," said her mother when the little girl returned, "and what did you see that pleased you best?" and the little girl mentioned the mouse.

And what of the mouse? "You may call yourself a Patagonian Cavy," he said when the Gardens were closed, "but it doesn't follow that you're everybody. Did you notice a little girl with a blue bonnet this afternoon? Just after teatime? The one who called her father back to have another look? Well, being a poor benighted Patagonian, you don't, of course, know what she said, but it wasn't what you think it was, oh dear no. It wasn't anything about you and your remarkable qualities. What she said was, 'Do come back and look at this darling little mouse,' which merely," the mouse concluded, "again illustrates an old contention of mine, that good taste is not an adult monopoly."

THE CONJUROR'S CONFEDERATE

"MY mother has told me of fields, meadows, and hedges ; but I have never seen them. She has told me also of guns, and dogs, and ferrets, and all the perils of warren life ; but of these I know nothing too. It is very unlikely that I ever shall ; for I am in love with my art and will not abandon it until I must. My mother says I must, before very long, because I am growing so fast ; but I mean to keep small. I shall reduce, I shall eat less and less ; I eat hardly anything now. I couldn't bear to change this wonderful career.

"This is my second winter, and I still go into his pocket quite easily. Why should everyone grow big ? There are dwarf men ; why not dwarf rabbits ?

"My mother says that when I am too big I shall just live in a hutch all day and see no

one. But I wouldn't do that; I would die sooner. It is very easy to die if you want to.

"What sort of a life do you think I should have if I could not help my master, and if I knew that another was helping him instead? That would be the terrible part. Once it did happen to me, when I was ill and my brother went to a party for me. I suffered agonies all the evening. I seemed to hear the children laughing, and see them all open-mouthed with amazement and rapture when he was pulled kicking out of the empty hat. It was terrible. I lay there sobbing and biting my claws. But it was all right when he came back, for I heard my master saying to his wife that Tommy (that is my brother's name) was a fool. 'Too heavy, too,' he added, and then he brought me, with his own hands, a new crisp lettuce to see if I could eat again, and I ate all and have never been ill since.

"I daresay if I was an ordinary stage conjuror's rabbit I could bear old age better.

But we are not ordinary : we go to children's parties. There is all the difference in the world.

"You have no idea how many children I see. And to hear them laugh ; that is the best ! I hear them laugh all the time, but I see them only for a minute or two. You must understand that until my trick comes on—and it is usually a late one—I lie all comfortable, although quivering with excitement, in my basket. I can't see, but I can hear everything. Of course, I know exactly what is happening, although I can't see it. I know the order of the tricks perfectly. 'Now he's catching money in the air,' I say to myself. 'Now he's finding an egg in a little girl's hair.' 'Now he's passing cards through his body'; and so on.

"And then comes the great moment when I hear him say, 'For my next trick I shall require the loan of a hat. Can anyone oblige me with a tall hat ? As this is a rather messy trick, I don't care to use my own.'

They always laugh at that ; but they little think what those words are meaning to a small black rabbit in a basket, and how my heart is beating.

"Then the trick begins. First my master takes out of the hat a great bunch of flags, then heaps of flowers, then Japanese lanterns, and then a wig. I mustn't tell you how this is done, but I know ; and I mustn't tell you how or when I am put into the hat, because that might lead you to think less of my master's magic ; but after the wig has been taken out and they are all laughing, there is a moment. . . .

"Then my heart seems to stand quite still. When I come to myself I hear my master say, 'Excuse me, sir, but you carry very odd things in your hat. I thought the wig was the last of them ; but here is one more.' I can't see the children, but I know exactly how they are looking while he says this—all leaning forward, with their mouths open and their eyes so bright. And then my master

takes hold of my ears, pulls me up with a swift movement and waves me in the air. How I kick, how they scream with delight! 'Oh, the little darling!' they cry. 'Oh, the sweet!' 'The pet!'

"How could I give this up? What has life for me without my art?

"Sometimes when we are performing in a small house where there is no platform, the little girls make a rush for me, and seize me from my master, and hug me and kiss me. I have been a good deal squeezed now and then; but I know it is because I have done well. If I had not kicked so bravely they would not be so eager to hold me and love me. It is homage to art. But my master soon takes me from them and puts me in my basket again. I am afraid he has rather a jealous disposition."

THE REASON

IN vain I had held my breath and moved with a velvet tread ; not a rabbit could I see. And this was the edge of a copse famous for them ; it was their feeding hour, and no one could be more stealthy, more silent, than I ; yet not a sign of my prey. I had stepped on no snapping twig ; I had neither sneezed nor tripped ; the wind was the other way—but rabbits there were none.

That night I had a huge Welsh rabbit for supper, and later a huge English rabbit sat at the foot of my bed and talked.

"So you had no luck ?" he remarked, and laughed. A rabbit's laugh is soft and possibly a little bit malicious.

"None," I said. "I never even got a shot."

He laughed again. "You will, next time," he said. "That's certain. The odds against us are too heavy, even without those white

scuts which the good God in His infinite wisdom ordained as our back lights. Nothing kinder to the man with a gun could He have contrived; not even our eyes seeing behind us as well as in front of us can quite compensate for this fundamental handicap. But however quick we are, what chance have we against an accurate aim and a double barrel? I'm told that a fish can often get off a hook, that there's some equality in the angling contest; but when it comes to powder and shot and an accurate aim we are done."

I said nothing. The situation seemed rather delicate. All that I had to offer in defence of slaughter was the feeble remark, "After all, we do eat you"; but I suppressed it as adding insult to injury.

Instead, "What I want to know," I asked, "is why I was so unlucky this afternoon. What was happening in the burrows to keep you at home? You couldn't hear me, I'll swear. And the wind was the other way. Were you all at a matinée or what?"

"I'll tell you," he said. "You came out at a time when nobody had anything much to do, and so you had no chance."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, did you notice what a lot of swallows there were?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well, every one of those swallows was telling us about you. 'There's a fellow with a gun,' they were saying, 'creeping up the hedge. Look out!'"

"Pretty rotten, wasn't it?" I asked. "Spoiling sport, I call that."

"We call it standing by our friends," said the rabbit. "There are two ways of looking at everything. The swallows might have been somewhere else; it was just your bad luck that they were there—or may I say our good luck? And there was a blackbird screaming; do you remember him?"

"Yes," I said, "I was very angry with him. I thought he might disturb you."

"He did," replied the rabbit, "very much.

That screaming said, 'Look out. A fellow with a gun is creeping up the hedge.' No one was ever so well advertised as you. Everything gave you away. There were lots of flies, weren't there?"

"Millions," I said; "all over me."

"Some of them flew on ahead," said the rabbit, "to tell us about a fellow with a gun creeping up the hedge. 'We're bothering him,' they added, 'but you'd better scoot all the same.' And we scooted."

"So that's what happens," I remarked. "And you call yourselves sportsmen! Well, I'm dashed. But what I can't understand is why they're all so fond of you."

"They're not," said the rabbit. "It's not devotion to us that is the motive, but dislike of you. The more they see of men the more they are anxious that rabbits should have a chance against them. It's a kind of trade union, except that we work all the time. Freemasonry perhaps is a better description. Why, even that little Irish cow you're so fond

of, and think is so fond of you, was on our side. Four feet are thicker than two, you know. 'Look out,' she said; 'he's creeping up the hedge with a gun. Not that he's anything of a shot, judging by his general want of sense; but you'd better be careful.'"

"The traitor!" I exclaimed. "But don't say that my dogs have ever let me down."

"Dogs!" said the rabbit with a snort. "We are not on speaking terms with dogs. There are four feet and four feet, I'd have you know."

PIGEONS

MUSIC-HALLS are (of course) not what they used to be—any more than anything else is. So far as I can observe from infrequent visits, the number of available performers has dwindled to such a point that the changes are being rung on a very few, and novelty, at any rate in London, is rare. But I found recently a most charming new turn in the shape of Hamilton Conrad, a trainer of pigeons.

One thinks normally of the pigeon as not too sagacious a bird. In Trafalgar Square, in St. Paul's Churchyard, at the British Museum and the Guildhall, although he is bold and voracious, he is also frightened far too easily, for he ought to know by now that no Egyptian ibis, no Scandinavian stork, was ever safer. Even in Venice he fails (although this may be his concession to routine) to hear

without all the machinery of alarm the sound of the noonday gun, which he and his forbears have been securely accustomed to for many, many years ; while anybody who falls a victim to the wiles of the gold-brick merchant or other obvious swindler is given his name. Another pigeon, we say, has been plucked.

Yet the astonishing performances of homers prove what the pigeon can do on the grand scale, and Mr. Conrad's little company shows its willingness to pass under the dominion of the human will, not only with exact docility but, to all appearances, with enjoyment. After having put his troupe through various evolutions on the stage, this gentleman dismisses them—some fifteen or twenty—to the utmost heights of the building, where, through the haze of tobacco smoke, they are lost to view. He then calls them one by one to rejoin him : this one to settle on his right shoulder, that on his left ; this one on his right wrist, that on his left ; and down from the roof they come, in due order, beautiful

fluttering things, to obey. The fifth—whose name I fancy is Swifty—has a more spectacular rôle, and never have I seen anything prettier. Swifty is bidden to take its place on its master's head, but not to fly thither in the ordinary way, but to plane down. And suddenly, in its oblique descent, out of the mist, comes this white visitant as from another world, straight as a dart—straight, I might even say (for the thought actually came into my mind under those odd and alien surroundings) as the golden line marked out for the dove in Crivelli's Annunciation in the National Gallery.

So much for the Big Five. There still remain up aloft the rest of the birds, and these Mr. Conrad summons in a flock, so that they all fly down simultaneously and, settling on a tray, bring to an end this very exceptional and entertaining turn.

Although surprised by the perfection of the training of these birds, I was, perhaps, more prepared than some of the audience for their happiness in their performance, because almost

daily I have evidence of a pigeon's sense of fun. From a window through which my eyes stray as often as they can, I have a view of a spreading plane tree, with a little tree close by. A number of pigeons are continually drinking and bathing in the basin of the fountain, or preening their feathers or sunning themselves around its rim. The only other regular frequenters of this courtyard (beyond such negligible persons as the lawyers who maintain it) are two kittens, both animated by a single thought, which is to pursue, capture, destroy and at leisure consume, one of these pigeons. To this end they lie along the branches of the little tree endeavouring to fascinate the birds with the bright eyes of desire ; to the same end they creep stealthily over the gravel, so diminishing their trifling height as almost to be sinking into the hard ground, advancing inch by inch upon their prey. But does this cause that prey a moment's anxiety ? Not one. They continue their occupation undisturbed until

the kittens are as near as is desirable, and then, with a chuckle, move quickly out of range. It may be a concerted game; the kittens may be chaffing them, *sotto voce*, all the time; but I think not. I think that it is the birds' comedy, enjoyed by them to the full.

On mentioning Mr. Conrad's pigeons to an artist friend, he was reminded of an incident in Florence which I am glad to have the opportunity of recording. Once, while loitering in the City of Flowers, he found himself on the outskirts of an open-air political meeting, and remained to watch. The speaker, who was doing his best to arouse enthusiasm, had just begun to succeed, when face after face began to turn upwards in the direction of an adjacent campanile. You know how irresistible is any untoward sight, high up; how all eyes are mobilized to gaze; and soon the orator had not a single attentive listener. How could he have, when there was such a rival as a pigeon in distress, its

foot having been caught in a crevice of the red brick façade? In its efforts to get free the poor creature became every moment more frantic. At last someone had the happy thought of fetching a ladder, and when it was brought and erected, the orator not only had no audience but no neighbours, for the crowd had moved away in a body to cheer the rescuer on; and when the release was complete, all thought of politics had vanished from their minds.—A good story, and not the less so for being set in a country where even the smallest and least nutritious of birds are in daily danger of being blown to atoms.

AN IVORY-HANDED DAUGHTER OF TOIL

AMONG the well-to-do who have succumbed to the chicken-culture fashion is my friend, little Mrs. Flutterleigh. As she is an intense follower of the mode, whatever it is, I was not surprised, when I went over to her place to lunch the other day, to find that half of the paddock, where we used to play cricket, is now wired off and filled with coops, about which were browsing and pecking numberless birds, all of them I am sure of illustrious ancestry.

"Yes," said Mrs. Flutterleigh at lunch, "I am going in for poultry very seriously. It is not only a very amusing hobby, but I intend to make it pay me handsomely, too."

"Amusing?" I replied. "How can you

possibly call anything to do with those brainless creatures amusing ?"

"Of course it is," she said. "It is always amusing to feed things, incubate them, bring them up."

Her sister (a very charming woman) laughed. "As though Anita had anything to do with their care !" she said. "It's all done for her."

"Nonsense !" exclaimed little Mrs. Flutterleigh. "I am round the pens every morning. There's one special lot I am going to feed directly after lunch. That's what I've been keeping these potatoes for." And she drew our attention to three white and waxy new potatoes cooling on a plate beside her : some of the first new English potatoes I have had this year ; delicious ; dug from her own garden by a gardener who, if he had had his way, would not have disturbed them for six weeks. You know how his kind hates us eating anything "early."

"Of course I look after them !" she con-

tinued. "Honoria always makes me out to be such a rotter. Directly lunch is over I'll show you."

Lunch being finished we strolled to the enclosure and made our way as best we could through a mob of greedy birds to the netted space where Mrs. Flutterleigh's special favourites are kept apart. About a dozen dazzling La Bresses (whose legs, as you perhaps know, were by Providence made infinitesimal in order that their white meat might be the more abundant) charged at us.

"There!" said Mrs. Flutterleigh; "aren't they beauties? I never reared a finer brood."

I agreed. "I don't wonder you like to keep the feeding of them in your own hands," I said. "Where are the potatoes?"

In reply she uttered a little cry of panic. "Good heavens!" she exclaimed. "It's most extraordinary, but I'm afraid I ate them on the way."

THE PARROT

(*The essay that follows was written before that amusing and variegated and apparently sagacious bird, the parrot, passed under a cloud. This tragic occultation happened all in a moment, in the year* 1929, *and it may be that historians will respect that year more on account of the discovery and dread of psittacosis than for any other reason.*)

THE sight, some little time ago, at a music hall, of a comedienne singing a song amid a critical commentary from a parrot perched on her shoulder, brought to my mind a story in an old magazine, in which a clue to hidden treasure was given to a traveller in a more ingenious way than I have ever met. The traveller, a botanist or an entomologist in the wilds of South America, was struck by the persistence with which certain of the parrots in the trees about him repeated, with unmistakable distinctness, English words

which, in the ordinary course of life, none of them could know. They touched a chord in his memory, revived a legend of ingots or doubloons, and—by what means I have forgotten—he was able, by piecing together these words, which had been taught to the parrots by a moribund pirate, to come upon the secret of the hoard.

If there is any history, other than *Robinson Crusoe*, of parrots as the friends of human beings (me they most painfully peck at and wound) I have never read it; but here are two cases: the London singer and the South American naturalist. And I can give one more, from personal knowledge.

In the heart of the Surrey side of this great city of ours is an inn which is visited not only by the business-men and residents of the neighbourhood but also by inquiring pilgrims, chiefly from America, who are attracted to it by its associations with Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Samuel Weller—for it was here that those immortals first met and here that

they joined forces as master and man, or, if you will, as Don and Sancho. It still contains proofs that it was a coaching-inn with a central courtyard. Certain of the galleries remain, over whose railings a sardonic young man polishing boots might easily drop provocative remarks.

It is a tradition that in the bar of this hostel must be a parrot ; and a parrot there has always been, except in such brief intervals as must elapse when the Angel of Death beckons one away ; for parrot does not succeed to parrot with such instantaneous mechanism as king to king.

It chanced that an American visitor had taken a party of friends to see this historic building—and it is a great triumph when characters in a book, who were never in real life at all, can thus invest bricks and mortar with glamour. Dickens can do it here and in Ipswich, and Chaucer can do it a little farther down the same Southwark street, although the present "Tabard" has no such authentic

fabric as the "George." Well, as I was saying, the American party saw the courtyard and the gallery, and then, on entering the inn, either for lunch or for casual refreshment, were dismayed to hear that the parrot, a taste of whose eloquence they had been promised, was no more, and that his successor had not been obtained.

"See here," said their leader, "I'm tired of going into public-houses where the parrot has just died. All the same," he added, "I'll give you another"; and to one of the bird-fanciers near the Tower he straightway set off, returning with a magnificent specimen.

That was a year ago. The other day he went down to the inn to see how the mascot was behaving.

"It's a beautiful parrot," said the barmaid, "but it doesn't talk."

"Doesn't talk!" said the American. "But the man who sold it told me it was a marvellous linguist—marvellous."

"It has never opened its mouth here," said the barmaid, "except for food."

"Then I've been swindled," cried the American—"swindled! I'll take it back and get you another."

"No, please," said the barmaid. "We'd much rather keep it. You see, it brings so much custom. It's just because it's so obstinate and silent that many people come in; they come because they all know the best way to make parrots talk and are sure they can do it here. Sometimes we have them at the bar seven deep."

ZIGZAGS IN THE ZOO

I. The Finny Race

WHEN depressed by worry of any kind, when nervous from too little sleep, when surfeited by the actualities of life, there is no solace, for Londoners, more soothing than the spectacle of beautiful creatures enjoying the quietest and most detached existence in the universe. I therefore say, Go, O harassed, to the aquarium at the Zoo.

The Zoo has this in common with the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery and the British Museum, that whenever one is there one finds something new. I cannot remember ever having visited the aquarium which many years ago flourished at Westminster, even though Zaeo exposed her back there, but I am convinced that it could not have had the charm of the Regent's Park sanctuary. Of the Brighton aquarium I was

once a frequenter, and I have been to the aquarium in the Trocadero gardens in Paris, and to the aquarium in Naples, and to the aquarium near the Battery in New York, and to the aquarium in Honolulu ; and I say that for gaiety and distraction none of these is the equal of our own.

Of course, we have not the bewildering and indeed incredible deep-sea fantasies that fill the Honolulu tanks with colour ; but that is an accident of locality. No aquarium, I take it, could be representative, even when one is considering small fish only, while the leviathans could neither be transported alive nor housed. We must, therefore, look upon whatever aquariums we know rather as we look upon picture collections, valuing each according to what it possesses, and forgetting shortcomings. Judged in that way I should say that there is no better all-round collection than at the Zoo, nor any such attractive frames.

I used the word incredible, and really, although it is absurd, the alternatives are few.

Birds of the air we cannot emulate, nor can we get on very close terms with them ; but we can understand their mechanism. Many beasts, in particular dogs and horses, are our friends, even though the gift of conversation is denied us. But fish, inhabitants of that unconquerable element ! . . . A man who can stay under water for four minutes is such a rarity that he can carry his bursting lungs to the music-hall stage or the circus ring and be sure of a livelihood ; yet these nonchalant accomplished and magical creatures are able to spend all their time, radiant and happy, in that suffocating sphere. So much for their inhuman-ness.

Then we come to their beauty, beauty of form, beauty of movement, beauty of hue. There is nothing like it. Compared with fish, even the most proficient and agile bird—even the swallow—is clumsy, the most dazzling bird —even the halcyon—tawdry. There are fish in the tropical section of the Zoo aquarium so exquisitely lovely as to be almost unbearable.

Fish must ever remain among the insoluble problems of this world. While we can examine the warp and woof of rainbows, we know nothing about these creatures : what they think, what goes on behind those wide eyes, which, now and then, are brighter and more lustrous than anything in the Rue de la Paix. Do they see us ? They give no sign. Are they happy ? They give no sign. Are they unhappy ? They give no sign. Do the fish that look like men in clubs converse and behave like men in clubs ? We shall never know. At the most we can observe them through glass, whether the glass of their tanks or the glass of diving bells, and they are always mute. They are like the films before music was held to be a necessary accompaniment : movement without sound.

Not only might jewellers learn something in this Zoo aquarium, but modistes and milliners still more. Even in our own fresh-water streams there are fish with colour symphonies that could not be surpassed ; and

if our women may wear the hides of animals, wild and domestic, the skins of lizard and snake, and the feathers of birds, why should they not borrow the chromatic schemes of the deep? Close to the entrance are Sun fish with blue mottlings that, reproduced in some soft material, would look charming during the after-lunch parade at the Eton and Harrow match. In a later tank are numbers of little coral fish, with bars, from which racehorse owners have obviously taken their colours. But the most sensible fish for emulation by ourselves that I found was in the Tropical Room—the Beaux fish—with head lamps and tail lamps in full glow: an object lesson for cyclists.

One curious characteristic that is very noticeable is the fishes' disregard not only of us who peer at them, which may be natural enough, but of each other. Each one glides on his own serene and purposeful course without any consideration for those that may be in his way. There are no collisions: they

are in their progresses too sinuous and supple for that ; but there are actual encroachments, which, however, seem to be as little noticed by those that receive as by those that cause. I watched an enormous carp, very like the dirigible balloon that now and then moves over London, taking a stroll up and down his double or treble tank, and ignoring whatever interfered with his line of direction: passing, indeed, almost through it. Nor did any of the intruders say a word. "Where are you coming to ?" would be the natural reaction of a human being. Fish are either better-behaved or literally they don't care. Twice only did I observe any argument or irritability whatever, and curiously enough on both occasions it occurred in a tank of Angel fish. Can they have been misnamed ?

II. The Self-Statue

Not only is there, at the Zoo, always something new, but there is always something old that you had previously missed. How is

that? How is it that one may go to the Zoo a thousand times and consistently overlook one of its most ingratiating denizens, and then on the thousand-and-first visit come upon this creature as though he were the latest arrival?

There the quaint little absurdity was, all that long while, as ready to be seen as today. I had never seen him, or, at any rate, I had never noticed him. The time was not yet.

But yesterday, for me, the hour of the Prairie Marmot struck.

I had been watching a group of country visitors drifting up and down. It was very hot, and they were bored. They stopped at each cage, it is true, but with only a perfunctory interest in most; yet when suddenly one of the little free squirrels made his appearance in the middle of a path, a galvanic current ran through them, and their visit became an event. Every member of the party made an individual effort to coax and conciliate the little scamp; but in vain.

The squirrel had the time of its life. It went through its whole repertory of rapidities and evasions. It approached, and then, with lightning swiftness, retreated. It sat up and it crouched ; it waved its tail and was waved by it. It looked a thousand ways at once. It was shy and it was bold, but it was never bold enough ; no one, with whatever outstretched bribe, could ever quite get it.

There is, however, caprice in these matters, for when a little girl who had been looking on stooped down and held out a nut, the squirrel instantly took it and sat perfectly still beside her while eating it.

Moving on, it was then that I was conscious, for the first time, of the Prairie Marmot.

No doubt you know the Prairie Marmot's enclosure ; it has on one side of it the aquarium where the diving-birds pursue their live prey with such merciless zest and punctuality at 12 and 5, while on the other is De Mattos' sculptured group of the giant negro in conflict with the angry mother of cubs.

Coming unconsciously upon this retreat, I was suddenly aware of the oddest statuette. Pigeons, squirrels, and sparrows were moving restlessly about in the eternal quest for food, and in their midst, obviously made of stone, although coloured to resemble fur, was the rigid effigy, some ten inches high, of as comic a creature as a human artist ever designed. There this figure stood, without a flicker. And then, a small boy with a bag approaching the railings, he came to life in a flash, the perpendicular suddenly gave way to the horizontal, and he trotted down to meet him much as any other unfrightened rodent would do.

The Prairie Marmot is a rat-like creature, but blunter, stockier, twice as big, and light brown in colour. The learned, of course, after their wont, know him by a lengthier and more imposing name. The Director of the Gardens, for example, would never say Prairie Marmot on those occasions when he questions the keepers. Nothing so commonplace. "And, by the way," he would add, having

been satisfied as to the good health of the hippopotami and the newts, the avadavats and the hartebeests—"and, by the way, how is the *Cynomys Ludovicianus*? Does he seem to thrive? Does he prosper and multiply, or is the competition of the *Columba Londiniensis*" (meaning the Metropolitan pigeon) "too much for him?"

But, whatever you call him, the Prairie Marmot remains a most ingratiating creature, and when you see him with his two tiny hands holding a monkey-nut and consuming it with eager bites you feel that it must have been of him that the well-worn phrase "to sit up and take nourishment" was first used.

In the unimportant intervals between these two actions—this vertical eating and the sudden transformation of himself into stone, which is his greatest gift and which he does so often that he has worn his poor tail into a threadbare stump—the Prairie Marmot is of no particular interest. He just creeps about or disappears into his crater in the bank. But

as his own statue he is terrific. And the change is so swift. One moment he is on all fours, and the next he is a rock, as though a magician had waved his wand.

Henceforth no visit to the Zoo will be, to me, complete without a few minutes' contemplation of the *Cynomys Ludovicianus* in his quick-change turn.

III. Birds of Paradise

Birds of Paradise are a genus in which the Zoo is very strong. How many varieties there may be, I have not inquired, but in the Small Bird House I counted no fewer than ten, beginning (advancing from left to right) with the Great Bird of Paradise, from the Aru Islands, a symphony in brown, yellow, and beige, and passing on to the Lesser Bird of Paradise from north-west New Guinea with a misty white tail. New Guinea would seem to be the ornithologist's paradise as well as the birds'; for all the strangest and most sumptuous of these exotic fowls come from

there. In New Guinea you find Princess Stephanie's Bird of Paradise, chiefly black, with a peacock sheen on head and neck ; and the Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise, black, with an abbreviated yellow tail ; and the Lesser Superb Bird of Paradise, with a cape of dark green and a dark green pate ; and Hunstein's Magnificent Bird of Paradise, with a blue beak and blue feet, a dark green breast, an orange back, and two curved green tails like antennae.

This last is one of the most decorative birds in the Zoo, even in quiescence, but when (an habitué assured me) it shows off, it is gorgeous. "Show off now ! Show off now !" she adjured it, but in vain. It was close to this unwilling performer, so different from a white peacock just outside, which spread and rippled its ghostly tail for the benefit of every visitor, that the neatest and gayest of all the small birds of the Zoo is to be found : the Gouldian Grass Finch, the completest antithesis to the Great Indian Horn Bill, that masterpiece of

the caricaturist's art, on the other side of the room. This sprightly little bird, as bright as a colour-box, is green, yellow, blue, white, black and violet ; and, feeling that no home should be without it, I bought a pair the next day.

But I must return to the Birds of Paradise, of which there are still four to enumerate : the King Bird of Paradise from the Aru Islands, an arrangement in russet brown and yellow ; Wilson's Bird of Paradise from Waigiou, with two symmetrical curved tails, having, in its green and red and blue, a nouveau-art tapestry effect ; Prince Rudolph's Bird of Paradise from New Guinea, black and blue with white eye-rims and a white beak ; and Wallace's Bird of Paradise from the Batchian Islands, looking in its green cape rather like one of the mysterious diaphanous Angel fish that hover in their tank in the Aquarium. Who, I wondered, are these Princes and Princesses, these Wallaces and Wilsons and Hunsteins, whose names are to

be for ever linked with lovely unbelievable birds? That is fame indeed. Some day, I thought, I must leave all, break every engagement, raise money by whatever device is possible, and myself sail to New Guinea, just to find a new Bird of Paradise and have it called after me—Lucas's Bird of Paradise. That would be a deed to live by. The bird is mightier than the pen.

So far I had experienced nothing but surprise and delight. But the reckoning was shortly to come in—one can never escape it. Just as certain as the rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, so is the iron law of a bill for a joy. Lingering by some of the smaller cages I found myself admiring a merry little bird, with a black head and a peacock-green breast, who whistled with shrillness but charm: the Black-Headed Sugar Bird. How delightful, I thought, to see such a bird flitting from tree to tree in its own native land! And then I found myself admiring a gay creature called the Violet

Tanager and another little Sugar Bird, the Yellow Winged, which is yellow winged only when he flies, wearing in repose, on his breast, a deep dark blue, and sparkling light blue on the top of his head—pure Oxford and Cambridge. How delightful, I thought again, to see such a bird flitting from tree to tree in its own tropical country! And then, looking to see what tropical country that was, I discovered it to be Brazil.

You know how impossible it is, after returning from a trip abroad, to avoid meeting some one who has been to the same places, and who at once convicts you of missing the best things there. "But, my dear fellow, didn't you see the altar-piece by Cellibotti!" he exclaims, in pain. "You don't really mean to tell me you didn't climb to the Blue Lake!" says another, with a groan of pity. "But the cathedral at Senander is the most marvellous building in the world—and you never saw it," says a third. "Well! Well!" These are the amazed reproaches that are the

inevitable lot of the homing traveller. No one, as it happens, had made me feel too guilty about Brazil, where I spent a month during a recent winter, until I reached the Zoo last week ; but now I am tingling with mortification and the sense of time wasted, for all three of these little birds came from that land, and I never saw—not even in the Botanical Gardens at Rio—one of them.

THE RARITIES

(To the Memory of M. H.)

I HAVE been staying in a remote part of Wiltshire with an aristocrat ; by which, of course, I mean not a man with two motor-cars, or a man with illustrious quarterings, but one through whose garden runs a trout-stream. I used to think that the mere possession of a cedar conferred aristocracy, and I still think that in some measure it does ; but a stream with trout in it . . . ! Moreover, this friend of mine has a cedar too.

It is odd how late in life one does some of the most desirable things. Although ever since I can remember, I have been longing to be idle with a book in a chair beside running water, it was not till last week that I found the conditions perfect. The sun was hot, yet not too hot ; the book did not matter, yet was not despicable ; and once a peacock

butterfly settled upon the open page, an occurrence which in an instant justified the existence of author, publisher, paper-maker, printer, binder, and bookseller ; the air was filled not only with the pretty whispering burble of the current, but also with the plashing of a fountain in its marble basin and the steady descent of water through a sluice ; sweet scents came and went with the gentle breeze, and one had but to lift the eyes to see phloxes and dahlias in all their rich glory. And once—but that is too wonderful an experience to be mentioned without more ceremony.

One man's commonplace is another's phenomenon. To an Englishman, for example, in Dieppe it is nothing to read that a swallow-tailed butterfly has been seen in England, because on the adjacent cliffs swallow-tails are as prevalent as garden-whites with us. But what a thrill for the English schoolboy with his net to find one in his native meadows ! Again, it is nothing to a game-

keeper to watch a family of badgers at play in the early morning ; but it would be an unforgettable spectacle to a town dweller. And I daresay there are readers of these lines in Norfolk who are as accustomed to the sight of kingfishers as I who live far from water am to the sight of rooks ; but to me kingfishers have appeared so seldom that they are like angels' visits and mark the years.

And now I must record another halcyon moment, for as I was sitting by this little stream, thinking of nothing, quietly ruminative and happily receptive, suddenly a jewel darted through the air, and, burning bright against the sombre depths of a yew, disappeared again. Almost before I had realized its presence the kingfisher was gone ; but the day was made perfect by the flash.

And had I sat on I might have had even greater luck, for a fortnight ago, while my friend was standing motionless on his bridge, an otter climbed out of the water close by and strolled along the bank, bright-eyed and

noticing. Luck is the only word; and this is the kind of luck which goes entirely by favour of the gods. I have it not. The only otter I ever saw was at the Zoo; and incidentally I might add that the otter is the only animal in the Zoo for which (with the exception of the sparrows and the mice) one does not feel sorry. He seems so content; has so much of his "native pewter" (so to speak) to revel in; is so continuously and rapturously alive, making the best of both worlds—water and land. Whenever I look at him I again realize that one of the most satisfactory memories I can treasure is that on the single occasion on which I joined an otter hunt nothing was killed.

It was many years ago. The pack had come all the way to Sussex from Wales, accompanied by an indefatigable owner, who illustrated, curiously, pathetically, almost tragically, the hold that the chase can exert upon an English gentleman. For he was a ruin: he was paralyzed below the waist, and

had the use only of one arm ; but, strapped securely on a tried and faithful pony, he was able to direct and follow the hunt. It was a strange sight : the old placid pony tugging at the lush grass, while its crippled rider, in the grip of the passion of pursuit, yelled like a demon. Hour after hour this stricken centaur patrolled the banks and urged on his hounds with shouts and cries pouring from his twisted lips. Not an otter-haunted stream in England but knew him ! I often think of him and wonder.

Dipping the other day in one of the most agreeable of autobiographies, *The Reminiscences of Albert Pell*, I opened once again at his story of Sir John Lawes' otters, and, re-reading it, I felt more than ever relieved that that one otter hunt of my youth ended without bloodshed. "An otter," wrote Mr. Pell, who knew most things about English woodlands and streams, "is a delightfully amusing pet, and extremely inquisitive. When indoors he pries into every room, upstairs and down-

stairs, but has, as a famous sportswoman says, a bad habit of getting up early in the morning, having a bath, if there is one in the room handy, then going up a chimney and returning to get into bed with his mistress.

"My friend Sir John Lawes, as great a man in sport as in science, had a pair of these animals at Rothamsted. They retired by day to a small pool in the park. It was his custom at one time to drive some miles to the railway-station at St. Albans, taking the train there for London. On his return he never failed to bring back a basket of fresh fish for the otters. As the carriage entered the park on the way back to the Hall the creatures, unmoved by any other traffic, recognized the paces of their master's horses, and coming out of their retreat in haste across the grass, ran ahead of the carriage, jumping up like dogs at the horses' noses till they reached the Hall, when, the basket being emptied before them, they hurried back with their present.

"Sir John took them up with him to his forest in Scotland, where the pair enjoyed the forest as much as he did, taking themselves off in the evening on fishing excursions in wild Highland waters, to return without fail before daylight.

"A wretch of a gillie killed the female, whereupon the disconsolate mate became irregular in his habits, staying out at first for one night, then for two or three, then a week, and finally never came back at all; probably lured away by the enchantments of some wild jade with whom he set up poaching and housekeeping."

—Is not that a charming narration? I think the picture of the two creatures frisking ahead of the horses (like porpoises around the prow of a vessel) one of the most joyous it would be possible to conceive.

A LETTER TO THE COW

MY particular debt of gratitude to you, O Cow, is connected with nothing so obvious as milk. Milk no doubt is a great boon, and I remember a glass of it on a cold autumnal morning at an inn at Evesham some years ago which I have always believed saved my life. For I had been walking through Worcestershire all night, and this was at 6 a.m., and the milk was hot. Apparently in that stronghold of market-gardeners hot milk in the early hours is a favourite and tried restorative. But for you I should not have consumed it ; nor should I have enjoyed it so much or have remembered it so long and so gratefully but for a certain spirit from far Jamaica that somehow had found its way therein.

For your industry in providing the world with milk, unstrengthened by alien ingredients

if not always undiluted, you have probably been sufficiently thanked. Two of the most famous tributes to you are in verse, one by the Sisters Taylor early in the nineteenth century :

> Thank you, pretty cow, that made
> Pleasant milk to soak my bread,
> Every day and every night,
> Warm and fresh and sweet and white ;

and the other by Robert Louis Stevenson, at the end of it :

> The friendly cow, all red and white,
> I love with all my heart ;
> She gives me cream with all her might
> To eat with apple-tart.

But have you been enough eulogized for your butter ? That must have been a proud moment in your career when you heard that at one of the Wembley Exhibitions the Prince of Wales, on horseback, full size, was moulded in that honourable ally of the staff of life.

It would be interesting to probe the mysteries which surprisingly surround you—

you, who, one would have thought, were destined only to an obvious and straightforward career. That remarkable saltatory effort which is celebrated in nursery rhyme—how did you come to achieve that? And what could the provocation be that urged any one so sedate to jump over the moon? Knowing what we now do of your attitude to Daylight Saving we might expect you to have aggressive designs on the sun; but the poor inoffensive moon, why jump over her? And why so suddenly take on attributes that belong more properly to the springbok, the antelope, the kangaroo? We shall probably never know. All we know is that your gymnastics caused the dog to laugh and the dish to turn eloper. Nor shall we know, although we might be able to hazard a guess, what tune your venerable ancestress died of.

But enough of conjecture; let me come to the point and say why I am inflicting this epistle upon you. It is because I want with all the emphasis that I can command to sound

your praises as a travelling companion, the friend of the voyager. If I have had any pleasure in enriching my eyes it is due not a little to your kindly aid. I don't say that I should never have seen, but for you, as much of England, Scotland, and Ireland as I have, Italy and France, Germany and Spain, Belgium and Austria, Greece and India, Japan and the two Americas and the West Indies—I don't go so far as to say that it was you who sent me on any of my travels ; but I do with gratitude say this, that I should have been on those wanderings far less comfortable if it had not been for the society of two or three excellent cowhide bags.

A POSTCARD TO THE DUCK

MADAM, there is one blot on your fair fame and one only. You have supplied the cricket-field with a word of dread. Why your egg, rather than any other, should have been chosen to typify by its shape the most ignominious numeral in the multiplication table I have no notion. A duck's egg is not more like a nought than the egg of the hen or of the goose or of the turkey, and indeed it is far less round than that of the pigeon and of the owl. But it was upon your egg that the humorous similist fastened ; it was you who were set apart to humiliate those who fail to score.

For the rest, you are the friend of man ; in life you stand on your head in the water with the most enchanting insouciance, and, when the fatal day arrives, your gift of blending melodiously with sage and onions is beyond praise. Peas be with you !

THANKS TO THE PIG

PIG OF MY HEART, so much of our indebtedness to you is taken for granted that I want to write you a few lines of appreciation. For your friendliness to man knows no abatement ; I believe that every day you come to our rescue more and more ; every day, all over England, to the traveller's question, "What have you for lunch ?" the answer is more frequently returned, "I'm sorry, but there's nothing but eggs and bacon." The innkeeper's sorrow matters nothing, because directly we hear the word bacon our hearts leap up, the reason being that, as a wise man once said, "However good bacon and eggs may be at breakfast, they are far better at meals to which they don't belong."

A lot of rubbish has been talked (and sung) about the roast beef of Old England. The

national dish of this great country is bacon—a gift from you.

Eggs no doubt can be an agreeable accessory, but it would be an ungracious act in an address intended to celebrate your merit to stress them overmuch. Bacon alone is food for the gods. If I step aside and quote from Hogg's *Life of Shelley* it is not from any facetious motive, but (in case you have missed it) to let you know how one of the least material of men, an ethereal being who is usually thought of as a vegetarian, a beautiful if ineffectual angel, esteemed you. It is told there that Hogg and Shelley once met at a wayside inn and Hogg was eating bacon. At first this was to Shelley a cause of distress. "But he gradually approached the dish and, studying the bacon attentively, said, 'So this is bacon!' He then ate a small piece. 'It is not so bad either!' More was ordered; he devoured it voraciously.

"'Bring more bacon!'

"'It was brought and eaten.

"'Let us have another plate.'

"'I am very sorry, gentlemen,' said the old woman, 'but indeed I have no more in the house.'

"The Poet was angry at the disappointment and rated her.

"'What business has a woman to keep an inn who has not enough bacon in the house for her guests? She ought to be killed!'"

There, that is how you struck the author of *Alastor*. What Shakespeare thought of bacon we shall never know. Some affirm—— But let us refrain from controversy.

But bacon is not all. What of ham? What of brawn? What of pork? What of Bath chap? What of sausages? All these blessings we owe to you. Forgive me, however, if I am dwelling too long on what, after all, cannot be unmixedly agreeable hearing for yourself, since, in order to give us these noble dishes, you must first have passed away. I recognize that even my enthusiasm (and Shelley's) may not wholly remove the distaste-

fulness of so much emphasis on your decease. Let me then pay you a compliment that can be received with rejoicing and say that it is impossible to imagine what mothers and nurses would, on occasion, have done without your assistance. That game (derived from the exploits of your five children) which they play with babies' toes—what oceans of tears it has dried or prevented! What myriad wailings it has changed into fat chuckles! There is no music so sweet as the laughter of an infant, and no infant's laughter is ever quite so irresistibly musical as when its bath is over and "This little pig" sets in. I wonder who first wrote that story: our earliest meeting with what is called picaresque literature, "a style of fiction," says my dictionary, "dealing with the adventures of rogues." "This little pig went to market" was the version with which I was persuaded into good humour; "this little pig stayed at home; this little pig had roast beef; this little pig had none; and this little pig cried, '*Wee, wee,*

wee' all the way home." Your first, second, third and fourth children were interesting but ordinary ; the child of genius was the fifth. I can still recall the agonies, yet ecstasies, of apprehension as his arrival drew near and nearer. I wonder who wrote it. The pundits of *Notes and Queries* must be roped in to discover this world benefactor.

So much for your children in nursery lore. Your children in actual life are adorable. I can think of no young creatures so full of caprices and comic vivacity as eight or nine little pigs, black for choice. They are the embodiment of curiosity and fear, impudence and doubt, quicksilver and fun. All maturity is a decline from the freshness and innocence of infancy ; but in your case there is a wider gulf fixed than with almost any other animal. The little pig is lost more completely in the big pig than any one would think possible. I am sorry for this, although it is the table's gain. As for the little pig dressed for the gourmet, his place in literature is fixed.

Finally, a word of thanks for your assistance in helping us out in invective—I am sure not by your own wish, but very usefully none the less. The people that we don't like, whether for particular or general reasons—what do we call them? We ought really to search our minds for the accurate epithet minutely applicable to each; but we are too lazy for that. So—very unfairly—we fall back on you and merely say they are pigs. The child who eats too quickly, the man who won't have the window open in the railway carriage, the woman who edges her way unjustly into a queue, the boy who demurs at the punctual bath—each is rapidly characterized as a pig. As I say, it saves us trouble to think no further and to borrow your name in this way; but it isn't fair, because they did not go to you to learn these habits: they were behaving naturally.

I wonder if you ever tick off the pigs you object to by calling them men. Or are you too well-mannered?

THE DEVOUT LOVER

ONCE upon a time there was a fox who fell in love with a pretty little lady fox. He called her either Sweet Auburn or Loveliest Vixen of the Plain, and in the small hours, when all the world was asleep, they went for delightful strolls together, talked a deal of pleasant nonsense, and killed numbers of young chicken : feeding each other with titbits, as lovers do.

One day Sweet Auburn casually mentioned her approaching birthday, which chanced to be on May the 15th, and said she would like nothing so much as gloves.

"What colour ?" he asked.

"Purple," she told him ; and he agreed.

"With white and purple spots inside," she added ; and he agreed again.

"And lined with glistening hairs," she called after him ; and he agreed once more.

When, however, he told his mother, the old lady was discouraging. "They won't be out by then," she said, "fox-gloves won't."

His mother was a widow. An unfortunate meeting with the local pack had deprived her for ever of her beloved chicken-winner. She had however brought up, with much pluck and resource, her family, unaided.

"You'll never get them by the 15th," she added; "that's a fortnight too early."

"But I must," replied her son, with the impetuosity and determination of youth.

"You'll never," said his mother.

Undismayed he set forth and searched the country-side for fox-gloves. He found many plants in various early stages of growth, but all were far indeed from the time to exhibit their stock-in-trade.

"What did I tell you?" said his mother.

The day drew nearer. He extended his travels, but in vain, until one morning, at about a quarter to five, when he ought to have been at home again, he came upon a

fox-glove stalk which actually had buds on it. Carefully marking the spot, he rushed back with the news.

"But how can blossoms be ready in four days?" he asked his mother.

"Intensive culture," said the old lady. "There's nothing but that."

"I don't know what you mean," said her son.

"Of course not; you're only a child. It means you must supply heat and nourishment. You must curl your warm body round that stalk every evening as soon as the sun sets and lie there without moving till the sun's up, and you must water the roots with your tears. On no account must you move or nap."

"Really?" he asked nervously.

"If you truly love," said his mother.

"I wonder if I do," he thought; but after paying another visit to Sweet Auburn he knew that he did, and he promised her the gloves for a certainty.

Late on the evening of the 15th, when she

had almost given him up, he staggered into her abode, wan and weary, and laid a pair of superb gloves at her feet. They were a beautiful purple in hue, lined with glistening hairs and they had white and purple spots inside.

"Many happy returns," he said. "They're absolutely the first of the season. You'll be able to set the fashion."

"Darling Reynolds!" she replied, embracing him, and named the happy day.

LITTLE REYNOLDS

THE other day I made my first acquaintance with cub-hunting. To a copse adjacent to the house where I was staying came, at nine o'clock, the local pack intent upon blood. I saw the scarlet coats through the trees ; I saw, from a neighbouring eminence, the hounds pouring down the hill amid the fern and saplings as though emptied from a huge jug. Then I saw a paternal or maternal fox creep quietly out of the wood and trot away over the meadows, with none to follow. Soon afterwards came another, and altogether five were seen to vacate this old abode for one where quieter conditions prevailed ; none being pursued, because the business of the day was not with parents, but with progeny.

Thus deprived of the excitements of the chase, I returned to the house, but at about

eleven o'clock, on being told that one of the whips had borrowed a spade, I drifted into the wood to witness, for the first time in my unsporting life, the process of digging out. After fighting my way through a very uncomfortable jungle I came to a spot where all the hounds and about thirty spectators, including the dismounted field, were watching the frantic efforts of two of the hunt servants in their shirt-sleeves at work far below them in a steadily deepening and widening cavern, from which they were flinging the earth with a passion of toil that I am sure they never brought to their own gardens or allotments.

Now and then the digging would for a moment stop while the huntsman crept in to listen. Then a terrier would be inserted and we would all wait breathless. No sign of life. The terrier would come out, covered with yellow mould, and the digging begin again. Now and then a rustic took a hand with a spade, but never did the two hunt servants desist. At intervals the hole would be probed

with a pole to see if it took a turn, which it usually did. The pole would be examined by the huntsman to see (Oh, joy !) if a little red hair might be sticking at the end of it. The digging again ; the terrier again ; the probing again ; and further exchange of theories between the chief expert, the man who is responsible for the terriers, and the general in command, the huntsman.

The terriers, one or other of them, were often in the "earth" for many minutes at a time, and what, I wondered, were they saying ? What is their attitude to the cub—poor little cub, for the first time in its short life alone in perplexity, retreating anxiously deeper and deeper into the home recess which, until an hour or so ago, had been so safe and domestic ? What were the terriers saying ? Were they hostile and combative, or were they friendly and even sympathetic, as detectives are said to be with criminals under arrest ? "You're for it," were they saying ? "It's no good struggling ; they're going to get you."

"But don't they ever give it up and go off on another and easier track?" the cub perhaps was asking.

"Not this lot," did the terrier reply? "I know them. They're tireless; they never give up. There's a gallon of beer for the diggers too; it's just been brought."

And then the poor little cub: "Where's father? Where's mother? I want my mother!"

It was a few minutes to one when a new and longer probe disclosed the fact that there were at least nine more feet to penetrate—and even then there might be a second turning to right or left—and so everyone but the indomitable diggers melted away: the members of the hunt to lunch; the villagers to their homes; and the huntsman and hounds to an enclosure near by.

My interest in the proceedings having evaporated, I too left the spot, which had assumed the appearance of the beginnings of a new mine, reflecting, as I fought my way

out of the thicket, how adroit have the writers on fox-hunting been in laying all their emphasis on the run and the kill. When we visualize the Nimrods, they are always in full cry, leaping gates and behaving like centaurs in glory ; and yet they too must have spent damp and cold and dreary hours while their servants dug for infants.

I had forgotten all about the events of the morning when, on returning from a walk at about half-past five in the afternoon, I suddenly, at a corner, came upon the pack, accompanied by the huntsman and diggers, on its way home, in the hand of one of the whips being the mask of a youthful fox. So it had been a successful day after all, even though they had never strayed more than a quarter of a mile from the place of the meet at 8 a.m. Persistence was rewarded, a cub had been slain, the hounds had had their blood.

Later when I visited the scene of the excavation and was amazed at the pits and shafts and gullies that had been made, and the

number of trees sacrificed in the operation, I was reassured on one of the problems that constantly recur for public discussion. For how, I reasoned, can anyone say that England is done for when men will dig with frenzied energy like this ? If the whole country would put its back into it as these cub-hunters were doing, no competition could harm us.

MAN'S LIMITATIONS

ONCE upon a time there was a trout who lived in a stream much frequented by anglers. But though he was of some maturity and had in his time leapt at many flies, they had always been living insects and not the guileful work of man. Hence, although well informed on most matters, he knew of the hard facts of fishing only what he had been told by such of his friends as had been hooked and had escaped, and from watching the ancient dentist of his tribe at work in his surgery, extracting barbs from jaws. For, just as children stand at the smithy door watching the making of a horseshoe, so do the younger trout cluster round the dentist and observe him at his merciful task.

This trout was in his way a bit of a dandy, and one of his foibles was to be weighed and measured at regular intervals (as a careful

man does at the Turkish bath), so that he might know how things stood with him. Fitness was, in fact, his fetish; hence, perhaps, his long immunity from such snares as Alnwick dangles before the eyes of undiscriminating and gluttonous fish.

But soon or late to each of us, however wise or cautious we may be, a day of peril comes. It happened that on the very afternoon on which he had learned that he was eleven inches and a quarter long and turned the scale at twelve ounces, the trout met with a misadventure which not only was his first but likely to be his last. For seeing a particularly appetizing-looking fly on the surface of the water, and being rather less carefully observant than usual, he took it at a gulp, and straightway was conscious of a sharp pain in his right cheek and of a steady strain on the same part of his person, pulling him upwards out of the stream.

Outraged and in agony, he dashed backwards and forwards, kicked and wriggled;

but all in vain ; and at last, worn out and ashamed, he lay still and allowed himself to be drawn quietly from the water in a net insinuated beneath him. In another moment he lay on the bank beneath the admiring and excited eyes of a man.

A pair of hands then seized him and the hook was extracted from his right cheek with very little tenderness.

It was at this moment that the trout's good fairy came to his aid, for the man in his eager delight placed him where the turf sloped. The trout saw the friendly stream just below, gathered his strength for a last couple of despairing struggles, and, these starting him on the downward grade, he had splashed into the water again before the angler realized his loss.

For a while the trout lay just where he sank, motionless, too exhausted to swim away, listening with shocked ears to what was being said about him on land. At length, having collected enough power, he glided to safety.

That evening, you may be sure, the trout had plenty to tell his companions when, after their habit, they discussed the day's events in a little crowd. There were several absentees from the circle, and two or three fish who were present had swollen jaws where hooks had caught and broken away; while one actually had to move about and eat and talk with a foot of line proceeding from his mouth, attached to a hook which none of the efforts of the profession had been able to dislodge.

"But the thing that bothers me," said our trout, as he finished the recital of his adventures for the tenth time, "is men's curious want of precision. For while I was lying there in the water getting back my strength, I distinctly heard the fellow who had had me in his hands but had lost me, telling his friend that I was two feet four if I was an inch, and weighed within an ounce of three pounds."

THE AMAZING WEEK

ALTHOUGH this is a fish story, people who don't like fish stories need not be afraid of it. It is not that kind of fish story.

Once upon a time there were two roach swimming in the river Thames. Two ladies. The part of the Thames that they inhabited was at Maidenhead, and they knew practically no other. They had been born there, and there, until a few days ago, they had successfully avoided both the natural maladies and dangers incident to the life of young fish, and the insidious attraction of the dainty allurements fixed by man to his barbed hooks. They may now and then have strayed towards Taplow or Cookham, and in an adventurous mood, on occasions of flood, they may perhaps actually have reached Maidenhead High Street and peeped into a shop or two ; but for the most part they remained in

the home waters in their own set. It was a nice set, conscious of being better behaved than some of the frequenters of the lawns at the riverside inns.

On a certain Sunday, however, came disaster. Almost at the same moment, for they were the kind of girls who shared experiences, first one of the roach and then the other, after gulping at a morsel of floating substance, was conscious of a sharp pain in the mouth and then was irresistibly pulled upwards through the friendly water into the less desirable air, and then, after a cruel wrench, deposited in the utterly abhorrent dryness of a creel. They had been caught. They had fallen to the rods and lines of Mr. and Mrs. George Fortescue, of Church Street, Chelsea, who had come down in their six for a day's fishing, and for an hour or so had been seated in a punt on two kitchen chairs, getting colder and colder, but hoping for the best — the best hopes of anglers being indistinguishable from the worst fears of fish.

So far there is nothing in this episode to lift it to the honour of record in print. I am aware of that. Young professional men and their wives, while life still has an edge, and responsible nurses can be left behind, have constantly gone by car to riverside spots on Saturdays and Sundays, either to fish or to loaf; roach have constantly been caught. But this is, perhaps, the first occasion on which two roach were ever taken out of the river at Maidenhead on one Sunday, and on the next —but you shall hear.

Such a miracle having happened, the history passes from me to the two fish, as narrated by them to their friends a few days later, when, to the intense surprise of all subaqueous Maidenhead, which is, of course, the real Maidenhead, they arrived, exhausted but jubilant and voluble, in their old haunts.

"But where have you been?" the others clamoured. "We thought you had gone for ever."

"Yes, where have you been?" (a little reproachfully).

"There was a memorial service for you; very impressive. Don't say that was all wasted!"

"The last that was seen of you, you were beating in the void your luminous tails in vain."

"Tell us, tell us."

The two roach, who needed no such invitation, then began, telling their adventures, as two girls must, too often in unison.

"It was dreadful—horrible," they said.

"Yes," they said, "at first we could do nothing but lie in the basket, getting weaker and weaker and reminding ourselves and each other of what fools we had been."

"But your mouths," someone asked—"didn't they hurt?"

"Oh, we forgot all about that in thinking of our folly, and in remorse. That's when it all comes back: when you're pegging out. You'll know.

"Then the people unmoored," they con-

tinued, "and rowed to the bank, and we were carried away ; and after a while there was a lot of noise and shaking ; and then we fainted away."

"I thought I was dead," said one. "Indeed, I wanted to be."

"So did I," said the other. "And I shall never understand why we weren't. We must be intended for some wonderful career."

"Get on, get on," said the listeners.

"Very well. The next thing we knew was that the noise and shaking had stopped, and we were in a hot room, and the woman, surrounded by her children, was saying, 'There, now, be quiet for a moment and I'll show you the darling little fish Daddy and I caught exactly at the same time. Two roach.' As she said this she held us up. I was just conscious enough to think it was the next world."

"So was I," said the other.

"'Oh, what pets!' the children cried. 'Are they dead?'

"'Yes,' said the man. 'Of course they are.'

"'What a shame!' said the children. That was nice of them, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said the other; "but don't forget what they said next. They said, 'We can have them for breakfast, can't we?'"

"Yes, they did; and their horrible mother said, 'Of course, darlings;' and then she gave a little squeal. 'George,' she cried, 'I'm certain that that one moved!' This was me."

"I thought it was me," said the other.

"No, me. 'Purely muscular,' said George; 'of course they're dead.'"

"And then," said the other, "one of the children screamed out, 'Oh, Mummy, the other one moved! There're not dead, they're not dead!' and they jumped up and down in the most gratifying manner. Really, children aren't so bad."

"And then," said the other, "they insisted on our being put in the bath. The little Samaritans!"

"'I thought you wanted them for breakfast,' said the mother. A loathsome creature ; an ogre !

"'But let's have them in the bath first,' they said. 'If they're alive it's more fun to watch them swim.'"

"And one of the boys said, 'We might fish for them and catch them again, every now and then.' Didn't he?" the other asked. "Didn't he ?"

"He did," said the other.

"All these words, you must understand, came to us in a dream, and then suddenly we returned to real life again in the water of the bath. 'Well,' said the man, 'it's the most extraordinary thing. I shall write to *The Field* about it.' How long we were in the bath I have no notion."

"What is this bath you talk so much about ?" asked one of the company.

"Oh, don't you know ?" said the heroines. "How odd ! But, of course, you've never had our experiences. People keep great

white tanks in small rooms to splash in in the mornings. Not in bathing costumes, as they do here, but all bare. During the time they were splashing we were taken out and put in a pail. The father splashed first. He sang too. It was appalling. Then the mother. Then the children. When the last had finished, we were put back again. It's a lucky thing there's this fondness for water among the hook-fiends. Nothing else could have saved us."

"Yes," said the other, "but we almost began to wish sometimes we had gone to the kitchen, those children were so attentive. They never let us alone. They were either fishing for us with hooks—and of course we weren't so silly as to be caught again——"

"Nor ever will be!" said the other. "At least, I'm sure I shan't."

"And I'm sure I shan't either, not if I have to starve first."

"If they weren't fishing for us with hooks,

baited," said the other, "with the most repulsive things——"

"If they weren't fishing for us they were trying to catch us with their hands, and then dropping us because we wriggled so."

"I was dropped on the bathroom floor," said the other, "thirty times at least. But it was this that got us our chance, we mustn't forget that. They made such an awful row when we wriggled and they dropped us that the man said it must stop. 'Either eat the infernal things,' he said——"

"I'm not sure his language wasn't worse," said the other.

"It may have been. His tone was terrifying, anyhow. 'Either eat the infernal things,' he said, 'or let them go. I won't have them in the bath another minute.' This was an awful moment for us. What would they do?"

"'Oh, we can't eat them,' said one of the children, 'they're such pretties. Let's take them down to the steps and put them into the river.'

"'Yes! Yes!' the others cried.

"And that is what happened. They took us down in a pail, just by Battersea Bridge, and upset it into the Thames."

"Yes, and here we are! Did you ever dream of such an amazing week?"

THE DEER-PARK

AFTER too many years I found myself once again in the first deer-park I ever saw ; and the change was only in me. The same beautiful creatures were there, of the dappled variety, feeding in little groups, standing motionless as a stranger approached, and moving across the open or amid the trees of the avenue with the silent, timid curiousness of their kind. The sun was golden through cracks in the heavy clouds, and the deers' soft dapplings shone in its light, while when they moved in any number they twinkled, glittered, almost smouldered.

Now and then an old stag, with antlers so broad and branching that they seemed not his at all but a borrowed head-dress assumed almost as if for a charade, would pass with dignity and extreme deliberation from one group to another ; now and then a fawn

would trot up to its mother on legs of such slender delicacy that their serviceableness for anything but the most exquisite decoration seemed impossible; and twice there were royal battles between young stags, whose horns met in a terrifying clash and clatter like spears on shields.

These contests were interesting not only for the attack and counter-attack, but for the conduct of the older stags, two of whom at once approached very slowly, but full of purpose, to act as referees, and, if necessary, to interfere. It was precisely the same in each engagement, although they occurred in places half a mile apart. The second was the more exciting, for once or twice the referee had to break in, and once with a furious rush one of the fighters charged his opponent clean into the river, down a steep bank, and then jumped in after him and continued the battle.

All this I saw as we sat under one of the lime-trees in the beautiful avenue, and I remembered, as I sat there, that just such

sounds as these—the rattling of antlers in concussion—I had been accustomed to hear years and years ago when we were children and lodged in a cottage by the park gates. Certainly I had not heard it since, but gradually it grew more and more familiar, rising to the surface of consciousness after this so long submersion.

What the longevity of a deer is I have no notion, nor was there anyone to ask; but since those country sojourns were thirty-five years ago at the least, it is improbable that any of these lovely creatures, so rare and dainty and fragile as to be almost unreal, were the same that used to thrill us at that distant day. Yet I repeat there was no visible change whatever, save in me. Everything else was the same: the footpaths; the lime avenue; the oak deer-fence, still often in need of repair; the large house, once so awe-inspiring and now so ugly; the church by the Scotch firs; the red sand of the road; the curious house with the bas-relief of a hog on a plate

of Sussex iron near the church ; but most of all the deer, just as fairylike, just as thrilling, as ever, and moving exactly in their old mysterious ways. I was glad I had seen so few deer since, and none dappled. I will not see these again for some time, just to keep that emotion of surprise and delight green and sweet.

Considering how many deer-parks England has—though far from enough—it is remarkable that the sight of deer should be such an epoch in the life of the ordinary person. Yet the very word deer-park gives me a quickening of the pulse, and, I hope, always will. I came away wondering what the dealers would want for a pair ; but I have lost the wish for them. They should be kept more extraordinary than that. They must remain an event. I am even sorry for villagers who live near deer-parks ; for, while having so much, they miss so much.

The other creature from romance that I group with the deer as making a red-letter

day for a child, and indeed for some of us who are older, is the peacock. Now and then, but how rarely, there would be an excursion to some great mansion, when the passage from room to room amid gilt furniture and ancestral portraits was a thrill, no doubt, but the most memorable sight of all was the blue breast of the peacock on the terrace-wall, caught through one of the diamond panes. Until I moved to London and contracted the Kew Gardens Sunday habit, I suppose that I had not seen ten peacocks in my life, and now again I see them ordinarily not once a year.

The closest terms with peacocks on which I ever found myself was when I visited Wilfred Blunt, who kept many. They walked proudly and affectedly about the garden, they sat on the walls and on the roofs of the out-buildings, they screamed at each other and spread their tails. The complete skin of one that had died burned blue in the hall.

I expressed the usual commonplace as to their destructiveness of flowers.

"To me," said the poet, "they *are* flowers. One cannot have both, so I have peacocks."

From this, my first and latest deer-park, which has but a handful of cottages near it, I walked to the market town, a mile and a half away, and there I sought in vain for the little toy and sweet shop where all those years ago my first bow and arrow was bought. I know just where it stood, but new and imposing premises occupy its place. The bow was given me by one of those bachelor acquaintances who have it in their power at extraordinarily low cost to glorify the existence of small boys and emparadise the world. It is among the deeper tragedies that one can never receive one's first bow and arrow again.

ANDROCLES AND THE ELEPHANT

ONCE upon a time there was a traveller named Ernest Androcles. Although intended by his father, who was a Greek merchant long settled in England, for commerce, he preferred the excitement of big-game shooting, not with a gun but a camera.

One evening, wandering in the African jungle, he was conscious of sounds of profound grief or even agony. They were so loud that there was little difficulty in locating them, and, being both humane and courageous, Androcles instantly started to investigate them and, if it were possible, to administer relief.

After struggling for some distance through the labyrinth of undergrowth, often having actually to hew his way, he came to a point which, judging by the voluminous and almost deafening character of the bellow of grief

which vibrated in the tropical and miasmic air, was very near the sufferer. Crawling stealthily through the few remaining yards of vegetation, so bent upon his errand of mercy as to be totally forgetful of the peril of snake-bites, the explorer came to the edge of a clearing, in the midst of which a gigantic bull-elephant was rolling in paroxysms of distress.

Abandoning in his benevolent impulse all caution, Androcles sprang to his feet and ran to the sufferer's side, uttering murmurs of sympathy, all unaware that amid such a din not even a klaxon horn, not even a liner's syren, could represent more than a whisper.

"What is it, my poor friend?" he can remember saying, at the same time laying his hand with a reassuring pressure on the most contiguous region of the pachyderm's frame.

The elephant immediately ceased his thunderous lamentations and turned upon the intruder the full gaze of its minute but bloodshot eyes, which, Androcles noticed, bore signs of many sleepless hours, for around

them were the dark rings of insomnia and pain.

Androcles endeavoured to convey by his expression that his feeling towards the elephant was one of the purest and most disinterested loving-kindness, and apparently was successful, for the creature, who has long been known as the most sagacious and least gullible of quadrupeds, uttered a sigh, in which, were he not at the moment utterly deafened to all sound, Androcles might have detected submission, docility, and even gratitude for favours to come, while at the same moment it held out a massive foot.

Seating himself on the ground so that this formidable object might repose in his lap, Androcles subjected it to examination, when he found deeply implanted in it seven or eight inches of broken arrow, the poisoned head of which, although doubtless less potent than when it was first discharged from the native bow, had caused a festering inflammation.

As a traveller of experience, Androcles carried a varied assortment of implements and medicaments neatly packed in his knapsack, among them being a pair of pincers, which, since he was well acquainted with Æsop's story of his namesake, he had brought against such a contingency as this ; and in a very few minutes the barb had been extracted and the wound dressed.

The elephant's joy knew no bounds. It immediately changed its hullabaloo of misery for a vociferation of rapture and gratitude, which, though calculated to stun the listener, was less depressing, and began to fondle its benefactor. Curling its trunk about Androcles' waist, it lifted him several times into the air and then deposited him in triumph on its head ; it plucked for him fruits from the highest branches of the neighbouring trees ; it trampled for him a path back to his camp, the direction of which Androcles indicated by means of thumps on its ears ; and for many days, as long as the traveller remained in

those parts, it established itself as a sentry in the vicinity of his tent and conveyed him to whatever spot he desired in which to set up his photographic apparatus. In fact, no human servant could have been more attentive and loyal.

When the time came for Androcles to return to his own country, the parting between man and mammal was touching and tearful.

Androcles, as I have said, was the son of a wealthy merchant who made him a handsome allowance, and he had every right to consider himself as one of the lucky ones of the earth, with no need to turn his hand to any kind of drudgery. But on returning to England he found that a series of misfortunes had reduced the paternal firm to penury and that he himself was a pauper. For a while he subsisted on the sale and exhibition of his jungle photographs and on the profits of a book describing his adventures ; but gradually the demand for these luxuries declined and altogether disappeared, so that he was often hard

put to it to find a meal, while his father was forced upon the charity of the London Society for the Sustenance of Reduced Greeks, of whom, it may be remarked, there are not many.

It was when his resources and his hopes were at their lowest that one evening Ernest Androcles ran into an old and beloved college friend whom he had not seen for years. Suppressing any sign that he noticed the shabbiness and even raggedness of Androcles' clothes, this gentleman insisted upon his accompanying him home to dinner, and in every way proved once more the truth of the proverb that a friend in need is a friend indeed.

After dinner he proposed a game of billiards, jocularly employing the word "pills," not forgetting to twit Androcles on the extreme indifference of his performances in the old days, when they had played hundreds up instead of concentrating upon their studies.

"Yes," said Androcles, "and, as I haven't

touched a cue since, I am not likely to be any better now."

But he was in error. Although the statement that he had not touched a cue since was (for once) true, he could, after the match had begun, do nothing wrong. It made no difference what stroke he attempted, he invariably scored. If he aimed to pot the red—and that (except when he was potting the white) was his principal game—the red went down, no matter from what point. The result was that he had reached the hundred before his host, who understood natural angles and side and drag and all the rest of it, had made twenty.

"Well," said that gentleman, who had shown a most admirable control of temper, "let's have another game, because such a series of flukes can't happen twice;" but the second was even more miraculous than the first.

"We've been playing with a new set of balls," said the host at the end of it. "I

bought them to day fresh from the ivory-turners. An African bull-elephant's tusks, he told me, just imported. They evidently suit you better than me. We'll try the next hundred, if you don't mind, with the old set, and see if I can't make a few too."

"By all means," said Androcles; but when the time came he was incapable of scoring. His pots, even of the white, were misdirected, his cannons were too wide or too thin; he could do nothing right and failed to compile even ten.

"It's the most extraordinary thing," said his friend, when they had played a little more with the first set and Androcles again had scored heavily and automatically. "I think you had better let me give you those balls and you can start as a billiard champion."

And so it came to pass. After a few exhibition games in Leicester Square, the name and fame of Ernest Androcles passed over the world as the billiard expert who broke all the rules but whom no one could defeat. The

critics were confounded, because here was a man who, while defying orthodoxy, always prevailed. He had in all his career but one rebuff, and that was when an opponent contrived to substitute bonzoline. From that débâcle (and it was terrible) onwards he stipulated that he played exclusively with his own set.

The result was that the authors of the billiard manuals tore their hair. The ex-champions tore theirs and retired. Meanwhile Androcles filled every hall in which he gave his exhibition games, from London to Adelaide, from Leeds to Johannesburg, from Dublin to Duluth, and, amassing a huge fortune, was able to extricate his parents from the almshouse in which they were sheltering and re-establish them in Bayswater.

The moral is that, even by dumb animals, gratitude can be expressed in a variety of ways.

NOTE

The contents of this book, like those of its predecessors, *The More I See of Men . . .*, *Out of a Clear Sky*, and *If Dogs Could Write*, have been drawn from various volumes of my essays.

E. V. L.

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